

2-18-10

Good Evening-my name is Lyne Stokes and I am the program director of Young Adults for Advocacy Unlimited. Young Adults are the key to the future of DMHAS system of care. It is imperative that we preserve the dollars allocated to young adults.

Recovery is facilitated by a meaningful role in life. Education and discovering passions are the keys to recovery in the Young Adult population. Young Adults have a tremendous amount of inner gifts to offer to the recovering community. As an educator in the DMHAS system of care I have meet many talented Young Adults who work hard to spread the message of recovery through their gifts. Their passion of using their talents to help others is inspiring. They are proud of who they are and excited about what is happening in their life. The YA's are conscientious of the fact that to keep their recovery they must give it away. The support of the DHMAS Young Adult population of the State of Connecticut is critical to their long term recovery.

We have learned so much from working with this population. The YA's have taught me that whatever the obstacles are in our lives we can overcome them by perseverance and initiative. The YA's I have worked with have discovered creative solutions to life's daily puzzles that make it a joy to get up in the morning. They radiate hope with each learning lesson they encounter.

Without the support and guidance and education from the DHMAS system of care for these YA's our future would be lost. There is a window of opportunity in the YA age group as concerns begin to emerge when most youth are either ignored, end up in the criminal justice system, put into a drug treatment program or committed to a psychiatric hospital without their needs being met. Services to YA's must not be on a band-aid type basis. These opportunities must never be lost.

I work with the young adult population every day. They work very hard on advocacy for themselves and others. Many of them were present this afternoon to support Commissioner Rehmer during her testimony this afternoon. They know it is their key to recovery-giving backs to others-helping others in order to stay in recovery. 100 % of these young adults are registered voters. They are savvy about the budget cuts. Their very lives depend on Young Adults Services.

YA's deserve to be treated with acceptance, dignity and social inclusion to be able to recover. They have done without some much in their young lives. For some of them we are the only family they have ever known. We must facilitate the process of exploring and educating the issues of mental health and substance abuse concerns. The YA must be guided on identifying the tools of recovery and how to utilize them. Young adults must be provided with the opportunity to showcase the concerns and solutions available to them. These kind opportunities would further educate everyone to the fact that there is a meaningful life full of hope and joy and passion in recovery that we all deserve. The dollars allocated to the young adult population in the DMHAS system of care must be protected in order to safeguard the lives of these young adults. Again-they represent our future.